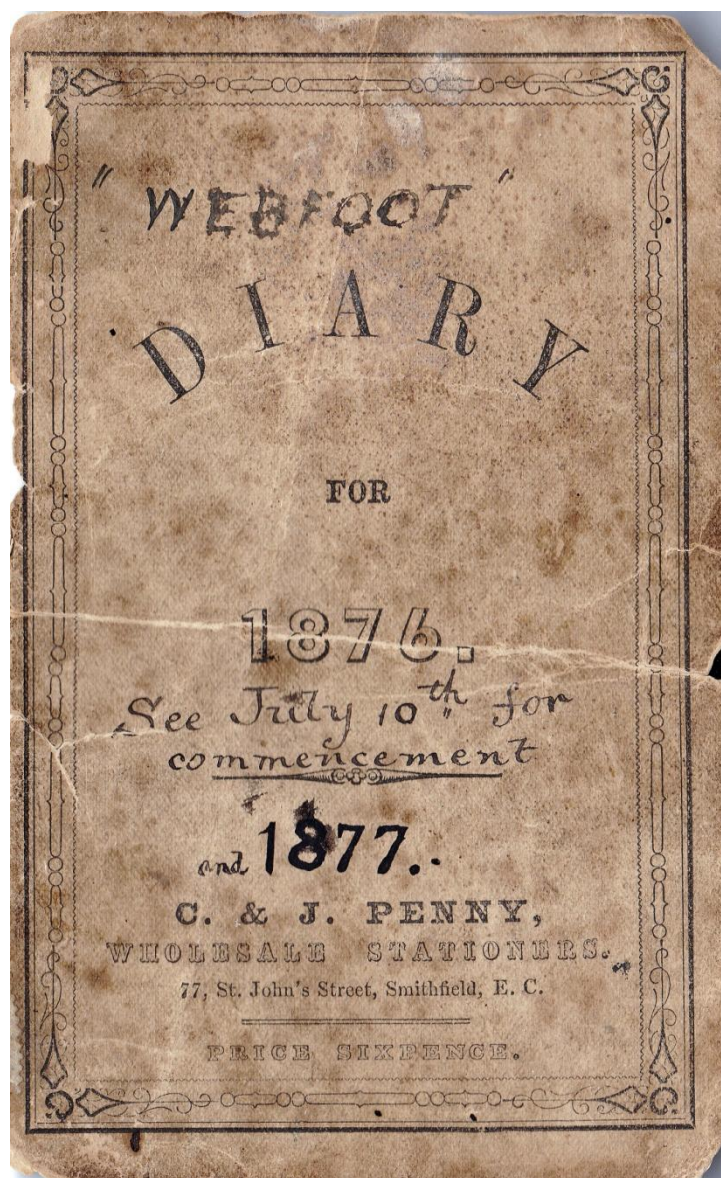


A Year on the Webfoot: at sea before the mast

1876-1877

Edited from Charles Lister Smith's diary by his great grandson, John McCallum
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Introduction

Charles Lister Smith

Charles Smith was born on the 29th January 1858 in Ebley, the second son of Richard and Emma Smith of Stonehouse in Gloucestershire. He was educated at Prospect House School in Dursley and afterwards went to work as a clerk in the offices of Strachan's, the Woollen Manufacturer, at Lodgemoor Mills. He then rebelled and at the age of 18 ran away to sea, joining the crew of the clipper ship, "Webfoot", at Cardiff. On his return after a year at sea, sailing round the world to Singapore and back, he went to Pembroke and two years later, in 1879, to London. Here he was married in 1882 to Gertrude Lane Round, who was from Stroud. (They had become engaged in October 1877 on his return from his travels. Interestingly he doesn't mention her at all in the diary. Maybe he met her on his return). His eldest son, Herbert, was born in 1886 in Highbury, North London. He had three other children, Marjorie, Alan and Mary. While in London, Charles had taken the name 'Round Smith' because he said there were a number of Smiths in the Office and he was fed up with being a Smith number..!

In 1888, he and his family returned to Stonehouse where he took over his Father's bakery business. His mother, Emma, had sadly died in January 1885 from uterine cancer and his father remarried in October of the same year to Louisa Artus. Richard retired to live in "Holmleigh" at Whitminster. He became the Poor Law Guardian for that area. Family legend has it that the children never got on with Louisa and when Richard died he was buried with Emma in Stonehouse churchyard.

During the next 25 years the bakery business continued to prosper although Charles' heart was never really in it. At the back of the bakery was a large 3 acre orchard and, seeing the wastage of fruit each year he experimented with bottling the fruit. As early as 1903 he was developing this into a business called Severn Valley Fruits and by 1911 his son Herbert had returned to join him, giving up his career as a journalist in Bath.

After the First World War he sold the Bakery business and concentrated on the Severn Valley Fruit Company. It became a limited company in 1936 when it was rescued by Cheltenham Dairies after the trade had declined during the Depression.

Charles' first love was always local history and he wrote many books and articles about Stonehouse. He was a member of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society, elected to Stroud Rural District Council, a member of the Stroud Board of Guardians and of the Stonehouse School Board of Governors

During the Second World War he acted as Company Secretary for the Severn Valley Fruit Co., although in his 80s, and died in 1945 at the age of 87.

His round the world voyage certainly cured him of any desire for adventure again. It is telling that almost his last entry in his Webfoot diary are these words - "to the Presbyterian Church to give thanks to Almighty God!"

Clipper Ships

Clipper Ships were three masted vessels, all fully square rigged, properly known as ships. Most also had a small gaff sail on the stern most mast. They were common cargo carriers in the nineteenth century, although barques were often preferred because they needed less crew as there were fewer sails to tend.

Clippers were developed in the mid 19th century from Baltimore schooners and were designed for speed with a large expanse of sail and a narrow beam. They were the final development of the wooden hulled sailing ship as after 1870 their successors were iron hulled.

To sailors, three things made a ship a clipper. She must be sharp-lined and built for speed. She must be tall-sparred and carry the utmost spread of canvas. And she must use that sail, day and night, fair weather and foul. ⁱ

When you read Charles diary you certainly see that the sail was used day and night, fair weather and foul!

They carried extra sails so needed more crew to handle them. Where other ships would shorten sail, clippers would drive on, often with their lee rails in the water.

The day of the clipper ships was over really by the 1880s but in their day they carried tea, opium(to make laudanum which is 10% opium and was widely used until the First World War for a wide range of ailments needing anaesthetic. Both Coleridge and Abraham Lincoln's wife were addicts.) coal, wood , spices, wool, people and mail. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 hastened their decline as the canal advantaged steam ships and the Clipper couldn't use it.

The most famous British clipper that survives today is the Cutty Sark at Greenwich.

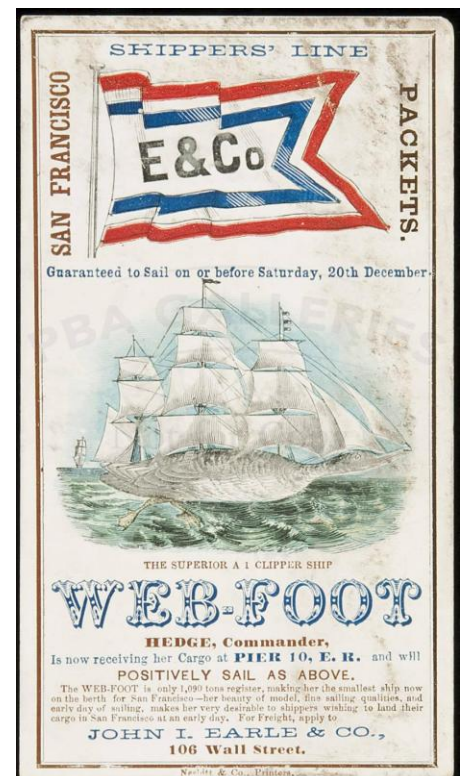
The Webfoot

The Webfoot was one of eight Clippers built by Shiverick Shipbuilders at their East Dennis yard, Cape Cod, Massachusetts, during the 1850s and 1860s. The clippers were: Revenue, Hippogriffe Belle of the West, Kit Carson, Wild Hunter, Webfoot, Christopher Hall and Ellen Sears.

The Webfoot, built in 1856, was the largest at 180ft in length. Ship rigged she was built for P.S. Crowell of Boston. She set a speed record in 1859 when under Captain Milton Hedge she sailed from Calcutta to New York in 85 days. On 8th April 1864 she was grounded outside Dunkirk and abandoned to the underwriters. Acquired by David Jenkins she was repaired and put back into service without a change of name and was the largest sailing ship ever owned by Jenkins.

She was sold to W .J. Woodside of Belfast in 1885 and on 12th November 1886 during a voyage from Port Townsend, California to Callao she sprang a leak off Royal Roads, Panama then caught fire and had to be abandoned. ⁱⁱ

Just how tough it must have been to be at sea in the age of sail is evidenced by this diary, working all hours, balancing without safety lines high up on narrow slippery swaying masts, constantly wet for months on end. Certainly not for the faint hearted or me I'm afraid!
No wonder Charles never wanted to repeat the experience.



Webfoot sailing card Wikipedia
see endnote

The Diary

"Webfoot" Ship Log

10th July 1876: Crew consists of 9 seamen, 7 apprentices, Captain, 1st and 2nd mates, steward, cook, carpenter and sailmaker. 23 all told. The ship belongs to D. J. Jenkins Co of London and bound for Singapore with 1700 tons of coal. The apprentices are, Frank Elgar (3rd voyage) Dick Beauchamp (2nd voyage) Harry Treweek, H Bowman, Arthur Ralfs, John Goddard and myself.

Left Cardiff at 10 am today towed down channel to Lundy by the tug "Advance" which left us at 8pm.

27th July: "British Sceptre" still in sight. Another log passed us today. Must be some heavy weather to southward.

28th July. "British Sceptre" still in sight. Caught the NE trade winds today. Treweek didn't make his appearance on the poop today in time, so had the pleasure of walking the deck with me and Goddard for the four hour watch together.

29th July: Did no work today and had the first wash for a week!

30th July. Saw a flying fish for the first time today..it flies just like a bird. Would have liked to have gone to Chapel at home.

1st August: Been overhauling the rigging today and working very hard. Some chaps have been fishing. I cut off the bottom of my nightshirt, hemmed it round and made a day shirt. It was a tedious occupation. Came in from my watch to find my bunk filled with all sorts of rubbish! No-one knew anything about it of course. The mattress was wet so I took a blanket and went to sleep on the forecastle head for a couple of hours. I was very angry and to top it all my pot of jam which had cost me 2/6d had gone so I was all ready to drag two or three out of their beds when a passage I had been reading on Tuesday came into my head "Vengeance is mine sayeth the Lord " and "forgive us our trespasses " I only hope that I shall always have the same love for Christ and always say with the same truth "not my will but yours be done".

10th August: Hooked a shark today!

11th August: Today we were hoping to send some letters to England by a homeward bounder and scribbled a few lines in readiness but were disappointed by her tacking away too far to westward. I should have been so glad to send a few lines for mother's sake. The paint work on the poop looks as white as snow. "smudgy mudgey" (cleansing powder) is abominable stuff which really hurts when it hits a sore spot and you wish it at the bottom of the ocean.

14th August: The other day I turned up my shirt sleeves and worked for a little while with bare arms. I didn't feel the sun to be very strong but now in consequence I can peel the skin of my arm from wrist to elbow. If only I am allowed once to set my foot on old England's shore again and once more grasp Father's hand in love, I think I may be trusted not to come into such a place as this again.

16th August: This morning while washing down the decks we had a salt water fight and all had a thorough soaking.

17th August: Nothing equals the quickness with which night moves into day in these latitudes. Coming in at three bells, half past five, from my look out on the poop the moon was shining quite brightly. I quickly drank a horrible cup of coffee and went out again and daylight was come.

18th August: I think of home, not as I used to, but with a sickening sensation of what may have happened since I left. "There is no peace for the wicked" said God and I expect none until I see Stonehouse again.

Crossing the Line

Friday 18th August 1876

I had heard a great deal from the crew about the mystical ceremony of Crossing the Line. We boys were rather taken by surprise as we thought it was all much exaggerated but when we reached 0 degrees latitude it was all hope in vain! We were condemned to be made sons of Neptune tonight at 7pm! Two men were on the forecastle head and hauled over an odd looking fellow who saluted the old salts with a gruff "how do my lads". He passed us without so much as a grunt.

Neptune was installed on his throne in regal majesty. The barber then presented his Lieutenant who stood by with the dreaded shaving pot and razor. The shaver wore a white shirt outside his pants with a scots cap cocked on the side of his head. The Lieutenant was an ordinary mortal so it isn't necessary to describe his costume.

"Bring me my boys grunted old Neptune and when these preliminaries were over accordingly us 5 apprentices and one boy shipped as an ordinary seaman who actually had never been to sea before were marshalled in front of him.

"How many are there?" was the next thing he said. "Five!" "And are these the lads who want to be christened boys of mine?" "Yes Father." If I had had a say I certainly wouldn't have given this answer -it was stretching a point!.

"Then commence!"

Ralfs was the first to be laid hold of and presented to his salt sea father who shook hands with him said he hoped long to see him sojourn in his dominions and then handed him over to the Barber and his lieutenant. He was sat on an old box, bound round the eyes with a white piece of calico. "What's your name?" asked the Barber and before he could answer the brush was in his mouth. "Where do you live?" "London" answered the cockney and another mouthful of tar was in his mouth! "What's your Father?" "Dead". A smack across the cheek. "Is your mother alive?" "Yes". Another slap.

And so on it went with slaps of tar answering every question until his face was black and blue. Then a razor was produced and his face shaved of the mess but his neck left for him to clean. "Christen him" grunted old Neptune (who, by the by, had been watching the proceedings with more glee than I thought consistent with his dignity) and down came a bucketful of water on the top of the boy's head, poured by a seaman who until now nobody had seen perched from the studsail boom yard. Poor Ralph shuddered and shook like a cat in a white sack and the led to the port side and bundled head first into an enormous tub of water.

All of us were treated the same except Howard who was tarred far more, ducked oftener than us apprentices because as Father Neptune explained he "should not have shipped as

an ordinary seaman without knowing the difference between a marlinspike and the royal halyards.

So much for crossing the line! I am glad it is over and can only hope that I shall never have such a lark, for if I do, it will of course be on a second voyage which I intend never to make.

19th August: Squally. Every few minutes the rain lashes across the deck so thick and heavy that you cannot look to windward and then in a few minutes the wind dies away, the rain ceases and no one could tell that a hurricane had been blowing.

20th August: Very squally. The fore t'gallant got carried away to leeward this morning such was the force of the wind. The ship rolls and tosses like one demented. Not much like a Sunday.

Oh God! Oh God! Shall I never be rid of these agonising feelings which like spectres are with me day and night. I dare not lie down unless I am sure of falling off to sleep immediately for dread of such thoughts of home as nearly drive me mad. Mother, oh dear Mother! Forgive me. I linger over that word and try to feel that you are better. I am reaping as I have sown. What makes my heart ache is that my father who has done so nobly by me and Mother who has (and still does I hope), loved me are bound to suffer too. Maybe this may be a wholesome lesson for me. Sometimes I can think this is so when I calmly trust in Christ and leave my parents in his hands.

24th August: I begin to take a liking for Howard, the ordinary seaman. He, poor fellow, got drunk in Cardiff, was shipped on board the "Webfoot" without credentials; we being shorthanded. There he is like I am, far away from home, without his family knowing where he is, his mother subject to spasms. He is a Gloucestershire man from Cinderford in the Forest of Dean.

25th August: It is very windy. It is not a pleasant sensation to be 250 feet above the deck loosing a sail in such a wind as we have been having for the last 2 or 3 days with nothing to grip but the yard arm, nothing to stand on but a foot rope that goes swaying back and forth.

26th August: Sighted the Island of Trinidad. We have been making a very quick passage, doing 1231 miles in 10 days.

We have on board an AB who is the brother to Thomas Castro, the famous Wapping butcher. He knows all about the Tichborne Trial.

Arthur Orton fascinated Victorian newspaper readers when posing as a man called Thomas Castro, a butcher from Wagga Wagga in Australia. He claimed in 1866 to be Richard Tichborne, the heir to the estates of the Tichborne family and the Baronetsy. Richard had been lost at sea in 1854. In a trial which ended in 1874 the jury found that he was not Richard Tichborne but Arthur Orton and he was sentenced to 14 years in prison.

27 August: I believe that Treweek has scurvy. His back is completely covered in blotches.

29th August: Caught a Dolphin which was a dark green colour when hauled aboard, the changed to a light blue then into a pearly colour and died a pale pink.

30th August: Getting much colder and we shiver at work on the deck at night even with the warmest clothes we have.

31st August; Sailors are not men but brutes. Smith has been beating Grey most unmercifully simply because he was a few minutes late in turning out to muster. He kicked him very hard.

1st September: Caught two Cape pigeons today. They are pretty birds not unlike pigeons but thicker.

3rd Sep: Howard on lookout forward, fell asleep and failed to report a vessel which came down fast upon us. We only escaped certain destruction because Elgar who was at the wheel noticed and put the helm hard up.

5th Sep; Strong winds and rain in torrents. Even with oilskins on, the water trickles down one's neck and back wetting everything from singlet to Monkey Jacket. My sea boots are full of water. Four hours on the poop is no joke in this weather.

6th Sep: Saw an albatross today. It was a monstrous bird and I should think that each wing was fully a yard and a half to two yards wide. It wheeled and turned with surprising rapidity.

14th and 15th Sep: Mile upon mile of troubled waves, every few minutes we ship a sea over our weather beam. The water swishes into our cabin and most bunks are wet. My regular turn at the wheel has been given up together with Bowman's and Ralph's as the skipper knows we are incompetent to steer in this weather. Very few first voyagers are allowed to steer even in fair weather as the ship once aback would go down sure as night follows day. The Captain says we are all doing well. I try to learn as much of everything as I can. All may be useful one day.

16th Sep: Began to read Pilgrims Progress today. I didn't enjoy it when Mr Keedwell made me but now I learn a good deal from it.

17th Sep: cold and cheerless today. Washed in cold water on deck this morning. Makes me shiver to think of it now even with 2 thick shirts on!

18th Sep: Saw a very large whale today while at the wheel.

19th Sep: Very miserable on watch last night as I did something which I knew was wrong. "There is forgiveness with thee Lord".

21st Sep; The diary is in pencil now. It is dangerous to use ink now as the ship rolls from side to side continuously. It wouldn't be pleasant to have a bottle of ink capsize into my chest. We are well round the Cape today. It blew a perfect hurricane last night and we were sailing under 5 sails not 23. The water still swamps our cabin every night. Nothing to be wet and soaking 3 or 4 times in a four hour watch.

24th Sep: The bulwarks amidships were stove in on the port side this afternoon such was the heaviness of the sea. The companion ladders were carried away as well.

26th Sep: Felt very poorly last night sick with a bad headache. Much better after taking the midnight watch.

27th Sep: We take on sail one watch and take it off the next such is the uncertainty of the wind. I believe we are about as far east as the Crozet Islands. (these islands are French and are about 1500 miles off the coast of Antarctica in the Southern Ocean..a long way south)

30th Sep: Caught in a whirlwind this afternoon. Miserably cold. Very wet, pumping out every half hour in every four.

2nd October: Mucky weather ahead.

4th October: Elgar gave me an albatross foot in return for taking a watch for him. It will make a capital tobacco pouch as when I get back to London I shall leave it there to be made up and then sent back home when I shall make it a present to Father. I wonder how he and mother are now. I do hope she is better It would make my future life unbearably miserable were my folly to be the cause of mother's...I can't write the word. It cannot be that all the family is to suffer for my sins. "Wind sea, stars. Be gentle wardens. Let him safely roam till longing hearts and tender happy eyes welcome the wanderer home".

9th Oct: I had the whole of Sunday to myself today. I believe Hains intends to steal my Pilot Coat. He has offered Bowman a new shirt to take mine out of my chest and to replace it with his which is too small. Bowman was too much of a gentleman to do this of course but came and told me directly and to keep my eyes open.

11th Oct: The First Mate gives another month to reach Singapore which will make the passage four months.. four months of miserable existence

12th Oct: We are going through the Straits of Malacca. I have put my coat in Bowman's Chest where I hope it will be safe from Haines

13th Oct: The weather is much pleasanter here and it is delicious to have a slice of the sun again although I expect we will have had quite enough of the sun before long. The Albatross skin is still in good condition. I think about home as much as ever and reproach myself the same. I was wrong.

14th Oct. A beautiful day. Shall begin painting the yardarms on Monday preparatory to going into port. According to the Log we have today done 147 miles in 18 hours. At work with the sailmaker in the last day or two.

15th Oct: I wish we could manage a service on Sundays but most of the boys seem so adverse to anything like it that it is next to impossible.

17th Oct: Again we are in the latitudes for flying fish. I have seen several in the last few days and they seem to be very much larger than on the other side of the Cape.

21st Oct: Latitude today 14 21" and 92 10". Have thoroughly cleaned the paint on the quarterdeck and main deck preparatory to going into port in about a fortnight. Delicious weather, fine breeze although squally at times. Everybody preparing letters for home.

24th Oct: No less than 14 birds on board today, one like a snipe, another like a swallow, one like a thrush. We caught the swallow.

25th Oct: The swallow died this morning but there was no flesh on it!

A dead calm and very tantalising as we are so near land. We are all anxious to be in Singapore. Boiling hot. It's impossible for me to put my hand on any metal pieces.

28th Oct: We have got 75 fathoms up from the chain locker. It was heavy work for the men the poor fellows perspired like oxen!

31st Oct: We are about on the line today. Doing about 6 knots in good style.

1st Nov: We expect to be in port by the 11th..fresh tack!

4th Nov: We are nearing land fast and I hope we shall see it at least by the middle of next week. It's cooler. I have been taught how to make a hammock and shall manufacture one when I get home if I can procure the canvas and roping.

6th Nov: I have written a letter home today and one to Frank Poole giving him a resume of the events of the passage. I hope I shall get a letter from him in Singapore.

8th Nov: Sighted land today. Columbus when he discovered America could hardly have discovered more genuine pleasure.

9th Nov: Very little work on now barring a little refurbishing to make the ship look fine on entering port. It seems as though the fact of being near Singapore is sufficient to keep the Mate's mind occupied as he cares no more as to what we middies are doing as though we didn't exist. I like it. As little business as he likes; suits me.

11th Nov: Very languid in this weather and seem to have no strength for anything. My bones seem to stick to my flesh and I am hardly able to get about. The night time is very beautiful and the sunsets are magnificent... Such colours as are never seen in England and always of a reddish hue. We have seen a good deal of islands since Nicobar and all sterile and steep looking with lots of snakes and crabs.

16th Nov: We are now just 400 miles from Singapore.. a dozen porpoises under our bows today. Smith tried to catch one but it escaped. I wonder how it would have tasted.

19th Nov: Today there are three ships and a lightship and the mainland is on the port side and lots of islands to starboard.

20th Nov: A native pilot has come aboard from off Malacca. He is an odd looking fellow with white pants and a cloth of many colours around his loins. The Captain does seem inclined to take him although he has an English Certificate. The boat is still astern and hanging on to us like a leech.

23rd Nov: The Skipper engaged the pilot finally and he safely conducted us into Singapore Roads where we anchored tonight.

24th Nov: In the morning we were besieged by scores of sampans containing carpenters, tailors, butchers, shoemakers and persons of every conceivable trade whose great ambition is to reach our rail! Early in the day the Captain went ashore to the Agent's offices to arrange for unloading. It seems likely that we will be at anchor for ten days. He also brought mail and there were two for me from Keedwell.

30th Nov: We were tied up alongside at last and in the afternoon I was the fortunate person selected to walk the three miles into town to collect mail. You can guess I took my time and had a good look around.

I expected to find Singapore a fine place but it was in reality wretched with dirty house and unpaved streets. There are lots of Madras men trading together with Chinese and Malays. The shops are small but there are a real variety of goods with inlaid boxes, dressing cases and fans; presents of all sorts. A thoroughly enjoyable time can be spent in looking around. The Madras men speak English fluently and a good conversation can be had.

7th Dec: 1000 tons of Cargo was discharged in just four days by means of coolie labour and after five days we were towed back out to the roads and then got orders for Penang to load with teak wood for London.

8th Dec: Elgar and I were allowed ashore for a day and it was our good fortune that we were able to see a Chinese marriage and burial within a few hours of each other. To my mind the happiest faces were those attending the funeral! We spent a very pleasant day and in the evening went to near the beach where we saw a memorial to the Earl of Dalhousie who was the Governor of the Straits Settlement and at 4.30 attended a service at the Cathedral. This was the first service I had attended for 5 months. We met a very nice Englishman, an old gentleman who enquired about who we were.

9th Dec: We sailed from Singapore and I am expecting to be at Penang on the 14th.

17th Dec: We finally arrived in Penang much delayed. I am utterly sick of sea life and sea society.

A native Government pilot took us into harbour and the next morning we were beset with sampans again just as in Singapore.

21st Dec: Anchored alongside the barque 'Extreme' out of Liverpool. She sprang a leak in Rangoon and was condemned. We have been chartered to take her cargo

25th Dec: Terribly hot here today on Christmas Day. We had a row up the river in the morning, visited a sugar plantation and saw of hundreds of monkeys and birds of the most brilliant plumage. We grounded the boat and went for a coconut hunt and soon had the boat half full. However a native appeared with a rusty old pistol and demanded half a dollar. We pulled off and ignored him hoping that was it but on the next morning five fellows came aboard demanding to see the Captain. I don't know what was said and I am not going to ask. In the afternoon we walked into the country and called at a Country House. The servant said the Owner, an Englishman, was away in the mountains recovering from Jungle Fever but invited us in for bread, butter, cake and anything to drink that we wanted. He said "Massa tell me to ask every European who called to come in and eat."

The mosquitoes and sandflies nearly eat one alive with them biting all through the night.

31st Dec: The last day of 1876. Good bye old year. You have passed like a fleeting shadow and I can hardly fancy I am here to start 1877.

February 1877: Everybody took his respective place, the sails were all loosed, but remained clewed up, ready to sheet home directly the tide turned. When however it did ebb, it was found to be too strong for us and as there is but a channel the length of the ship to steer in, of course because the helm could get weigh enough to steady her, she was over on the opposite bank; the tide left us almost high and dry. By the midnight tide

we luckily got her off and hove her to her old mooring by running warps ashore. This took us until the next tide, when we tried to get out again, with the same result except that instead of being broadside on the bank we were now on by the stern and there remained till the midnight tide following when we took 5 steam ferryboats to tug us off but they were of no use and looked puny things as they rattled before us. The Captain then determined to get a large steamboat to tug us out, as there are not tugs in Penang and accordingly the Pilot secured the services of the paddleboat "Singapore" and she being a monster in comparison with the others soon ran us to an anchorage in the harbour. Here we took in the few logs which were to come aboard for which we could not wait as had we done so we would have been forced to wait until the next spring tide to get the ship afloat. Ralf and I were in the gig with the Captain and a few pulls got us into Penang. When coming out we lost our tow ropes because the tug did not understand English and the 3rd Mate went grappling for it. It was dreadfully hot, any part of the body exposed to the sun first went brown, then red, then white like the skin of a blister and then came off altogether. We did not find it but picked up a hawser with a small cadge attached, bent on a buoy and went on board to fetch men to get it up. We had to pay a Malay 5\$ to go down on a line. He was under the water quite a minute or two. I think Allen the manager of the docks would have been very glad if we had not found the hawser. I fancy he had an eye on its whereabouts. He said when the ship was on the bank that he hoped we wouldn't be able to get her off or that the cable when we let go the anchor would take the bows out of her to get him a job. They must be hard up for cash to carry on the Dock works and I am of the idea that it will be a failure in the end. They are building a caisson for the repairing of steamboats and sailing ships.

Drink was very rife in the forecastle, all the time we were at anchor off Penang, as the men got money every Saturday night and have to go ashore. In no place like a ship is there such chances for contention to arise, the men all living together for 12 long months verify the old adage 'familiarity breeds contempt' in a decidedly forcible way and quarrelsome the order of the day while liquor was taking away their better senses. Burns especially came out as an abominable bully, striking Haines for but one crooked word full in the face without a moments warning, kicking him most unmercifully when down. The rest of the men were too drunk or too much afraid to interfere and Haines came aft to ask for a hospital permit. The Mate wrote him one and Ralf and I as the men were too incapable, had to row him into Penang, a distance of over 3 miles. We did it in 35 minutes!

March 19th: Sailed from Penang on Sunday with a good breeze.

March 20th: Good breeze

April 2nd: Over the line

April 9th: Caught the north east trades

April 10th: Aloft with Moses, splicing..

April 27th: Lightning flashed, the Captain called all hands to shorten sail. We took in all sail except the three lower topsails and jib but after all our exertions the weather instead of coming upon us, veered away to the eastward. Evidently we have come in for the tail end of something as the sea is running mountainous high although there is not a breath of wind.

April 28th: Still no wind. Sea steadier than yesterday but still very rough. Today reminds me very much of a May day in England, one feels very comfortable.

April 29th: A slight breeze today. The sea has gone down considerably and we are able to make a little headway. There is a strong current running here to the SW which is also favourable.

April 30th: Good breeze. A full rigged ship hove into view at eight this morning to leeward and as our chronometer is something out we ran the vessel off to speak to her. Hoisted ensign which she answered and then we ran up the flags which denote "Webfoot". She answered and hoisted her name but it was so misty we could not make it out distinctly. By the time we had got up "what is your longitude"? she had run close off to the wind again and took no notice of us. The Captain of that ship was as our Captain termed him "a donkey", but I imagine he fancied we were only signalling for our amusement. Lat 33.44. Very heavy sea running and drizzling rain. All rigging is being repaired.

May 6th: Hove to under main topsail. Wind fearfully strong and the sea running mountainous high. The worst weather I have ever been in. Later in the day we bent the mizzen topsail.

May 7th: Bent on a new mizzen topsail. Repaired the other.

May 8th: All day clearing up after the hurricane. Sighted a Barque today. She must have shared the gale with us. She looks as though she has seen some heavy weather.

May 9th: Set topsails. Barque still in sight. Wind right in our teeth, instead of sailing W by N we are heading NNE.

May 10th: Land ahead! This must be some part of the Cape and I hope we shall see some lights tonight so that we will know where we are. Still a head wind and the shore to leeward. Moses first saw it.

May 11th: Hove to again today. Very heavy gales all day but in the evening somewhat abated although the sea still runs mountainous high. Sea broke over us, tore up the battens of the fore hatch, washed the gangway ladder clear up over the forecastle and stove in some of the main deck. Took in the fore lower topsail this morning. Yesterday a sea broke over us, smashed in a window and filled the bath! I was just coming in from the galley with my tea when over it came in a blinding heap, soaking me and spoiling my only hope of a meal! Oh! Who wouldn't sell his farm and come to sea!

May 15th: Hove to again under a main lower topsail and mizzen staysail. We can keep no lookouts on the forecastle head, as it is very unsafe while the heavy seas are breaking over in floods. It was dreadfully cold holding on to the lifeline forward with the water like icicles dripping from my oilskins. Butter served this week which is very nice with coffee at 5 o'clock and for breakfast. The sooner this wretched weather is over the better.

May 18th: Fair wind set a good deal of sail during the night. The weather glass has gone up. We are as far south as 36' -quite far enough south. All our rice is now played out so instead of this we got pea soup today

May 20th: Good breeze. We have gone too far south so can retrace our steps. Banner is very ill and I think has consumption. The sailmaker has taken his place pro tem and is about as fit for the position as Burns' monkey.

25th May: A barge and ship in sight today. In 29' south today. Good breezes. Sent up the studding sail booms and bent the topmast and lower studs'ls. They are very useful Sails although some of the men who pretend to be good sailors say the gain is not equal to the loss of time. The ship looks perfect under a cloud of canvas.

27 May: We are very short of water. Today we have been unable to get any to wash with and are likely to go another fortnight to three weeks with none. We can hardly expect much rain until we are on the equator. Water, water! All around and not a drop to drink.

3rd June: Sighted St Helena. I was standing on the break of the quarterdeck with the steward who was spinning me a yarn when all of a sudden I fancied I saw land in the distance on the windward bow. Land Ho was called from the upper yard and the 2nd Mate called the Captain. After a lot of bother with the sails we were unable to make St Helena so stood away for Ascension.

8th June: sighted Ascension at exactly the same time as we had St Helena. It is a bleak looking island although smaller than St H. Could see a small brig running close under the land. Saw a brig in the night and coming up fast saw she was the "Emily" bound for Falmouth 67 days out from Singapore

12th June: I have been painting the Captain's saloon and have colouring yellow a small moulding which used to be gilded but has got very dull. It looks quite respectable and the Captain said "By jove it looks Capital!" I hope he likes it then he will give me more in this line!

The Mate is painting a ship on canvas for the Captain. He had the cheek to ask him what he would give him for doing it! (in a joking manner of course)

15th June: An outward bounder passed so close that we could see her running gear. She had no lights so we could have run her down.

17th June: The Brigantine we saw a while ago is still insight and we must be sailing at about the same pace.

18th June: Very wet.

19th June: 13 ships in sight from aloft all homeward bound and close together. Scrubbed the paintwork for painting. Very wet, nothing but rain, rain, rain the whole day long.

20th June: Caught 500 gallons of water in 4 hours last night. Tombey got his nose jammed in a soup tin last night and it was ludicrous to see him running around the deck with his novel addition. I helped him out of it once but he got it stuck in again and I had to take the tin from him.

22nd June: Very heavy squall when we caught the north east trades. Close hauled on the starboard. Heading N By W to N.

24th June: 78 41' a very quiet Sunday, beautiful weather.

27th June: A year in Jenkin's employ today. It seems but a short time to look back upon. Painted our living quarters a dark pink today with a white ceiling and whoever comes on board in Falmouth may be invited in without fear of their being shocked at the sight of a sailor's abode.

28th June: Real English weather today. Light from 4am to 8pm.

29th June: Ship now repainted in first coat and she looks beautiful from aloft, white and clean with the paint glistening in the sun.

1st July: An outward bound Barque in sight I suppose just fresh from home. Lat 26 4'N 31 3'W.

3rd July to 17th: Fair winds, calm and much painting done. On the 14th there were 59 vessels in sight!

18th July: Abreast of the Azores

21st July: 700 miles from the Lizard.

23rd July: Off the Scillies.

25th July: Sighted land.

26th July: Arrived in Falmouth.

28th July: Left Falmouth for Greenock.

30th July: Off Mounts Bay

1st August: Off Longships Light.

2nd Aug: Off Milford Haven.

3rd Aug; Off Holyhead

4th Aug: Off Isle of Man

6th Aug: Start of tow by Tug "Flying Spray"

7th and 8th Aug: Towed.

9th Aug: Arrived in Greenock.

10th Aug: Anchored in the Tail o the Bank.

11th Aug: 1st step on Merry England!!

12th Aug: To Presbyterian Church to give thanks to Almighty God!.

13th, 14th and 15th Aug: Went to see 3 productions at the Theatre Royal; "Mrs White", "Loves Labours Lost", "School for Scandal".

16th Aug: Nothing all day!

17th Aug: Started for home

18th August: Arrived home in Stonehouse.

To my knowledge, Charles never left Gloucestershire again other than for work in Pembroke and London.....



Charles taken outside the Severn Valley Fruit Co. factory office, probably during WW2 when he acted as Company Secretary and his son Herbert 'Bert' was running the business single handed.



Charles' children, Marjorie, Herbert and Mary with Alan at the front.

ⁱ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clipper>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.red-duster.co.uk/wp/category/shire-line/>

WebFoot image https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/fa/WEB-FOOT_Clipper_ship_sailing_card.jpg